

***Barth Society will meet in Montréal, Canada November 6-7, 2009  
and in New Orleans, Louisiana November 20-21, 2009***

Our meeting in **Montréal** in conjunction with the **AAR** will feature our usual Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the Friday afternoon session will be **Matthew Baker, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology** whose lecture is entitled: *“The Filioque in Barth, Florovsky, and Torrance”* and **Nathan Hieb, Princeton Theological Seminary**, whose lecture is entitled: *“Atonement and Liberation in Sobrino, Torrance and Barth”*. This session is listed as **M6-304** in the **AAR** program and will be held in **Palais des Congrès (PDC)-514C**. The Saturday morning session will be held in **Palais des Congrès (PDC)-520CF** and is listed in the **AAR** program as **M7-107** and will feature a *Panel Discussion* of **Bruce L. McCormack’s** book, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). The panelists will be: **Nicholas M. Healy, St. John’s University** and **Garrett Green, Connecticut College**. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** will preside.

**The Board will meet for breakfast on Sunday morning November 8 in Montréal**

---

Our meeting in **New Orleans** in conjunction with the **SBL** will feature once again our usual Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the Friday afternoon session will be **Ryan Glomsrud, Harvard University** whose lecture is entitled: *“Karl Barth: Between Orthodoxy and Pietism”* and **Mark Husbands, Hope College** whose lecture is entitled: *“Karl Barth: The Struggle for Human Righteousness”*. This session is listed as **Karl Barth Society of North America 20-301** in the **SBL** program and will be held in **Bacchus Suite-MR**. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary**, will preside. The Saturday morning session will be held in **Gallier AB-SH** and is listed in the **SBL** program as **Karl Barth Society of North America 21-123** and will feature a *Panel Discussion* of **Bruce L. McCormack’s** book, *Orthodox and Modern: Studies in the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008). The panelists will be: **Michael Root, Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary** and **James J. Buckley, Loyola College** in Baltimore. **George Hunsinger, Princeton Theological Seminary** will preside.

---

**The Fourth Annual Barth Conference was held at Princeton Theological Seminary June 21-23, 2009. This Conference on Karl Barth was entitled: “Karl Barth on Religion and the Religions” and was cosponsored by *The Center for Barth Studies* at *Princeton Theological Seminary* and *The Karl Barth Society of North America*. Speakers were: **Matthew Myer Boulton, Assistant Professor of Ministry Studies, Harvard Divinity School** whose lecture was entitled “True Idolatry—Karl Barth on the Christian Religion”; **Garrett Green, Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies, Connecticut College** whose lecture was entitled “Imaginary Gods and Anonymous Believers”; **Scott Jones, Doctoral Candidate in Theology, Princeton Theological Seminary** whose lecture was entitled “In Whose Image? Barth, Islam, and Monotheism”; **Lai Pan-Chiu, Professor and Associate Dean of the Faculty of Arts, The Chinese University of Hong Kong** whose lecture was entitled “Barth’s Interpretation of Buddhism and a Buddhist Interpretation of Barth”; **Mark Lindsay,****

Director of Research, University of Melbourne, Australia whose after dinner talk was entitled “Markus Barth and Christian-Jewish Relations”; Benjamin Myers, Lecturer in Systematic Theology, Charles Sturt University, Australia whose lecture was entitled “God and the gods: Karl Barth and Polytheism”; Katherine Sonderegger, Professor of Theology, Virginia Theological Seminary whose lecture was entitled “Karl Barth’s Christology and the Faith of Israel”; and Charles West, Stephen Colwell Professor of Christian Ethics Emeritus, Princeton Theological Seminary whose after dinner talk was entitled “Barth, Bonhoeffer, and Kraemer on Religion”.

**An International Symposium: *Trinitarian Theology After Barth*** was held at **Carey Baptist College** in Penrose, Auckland, New Zealand on May 14-15, 2009. This Symposium was sponsored jointly by **Laidlaw Carey Graduate School** and **The R. J. Thompson Centre for Theological Studies**.



Participants from left are: Nicola Hoggard Creegan, Myk Habets, Andrew Nicol, Adam McIntosh, Ben Myers, Antony Glading, Haydn Nelson, Phillip Tolliday, Bruce McCormack, Paul Molnar, Murray Rae, Ahsley Moyses, Andrew Burgess, Ivor Davidson and Ulrike Link-Wieczorek.

Scholars, pastors, students, and interested lay people from around the world gathered at Carey Baptist College in Auckland for an intense two-day symposium on Trinitarian theology with special reference to the thinking of Karl Barth and Thomas F. Torrance. The

conference began on Thursday morning, May 14 with a first keynote address by Professor Paul D. Molnar of St. John’s University in New York. Molnar presented a paper arguing that when the Holy Spirit is taken seriously as the enabling condition of human knowledge of



the triune God, then natural theology is simply marginalized as an accurate way of knowing God because it is then seen that it is not by reflecting on nature that God is accurately known; rather it is through God that God is known. Relying on the thinking of Karl Barth and Thomas F. Torrance, Molnar argued that since God is known by faith and by grace, we have positive and certain knowledge of God only when our thinking begins and ends with Jesus Christ since the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Word and thus enables us to know God by miraculously uniting us to the incarnate Word and through him to the Father. When theological epistemology specifically focuses on the Holy Spirit as the enabling condition of true knowledge of God, such thinking rules out all attempts to know God which claim that we can know “that God is” through reason while remaining unaware of “who God is”.

In a second keynote address on Friday morning, May 15 Professor **Bruce L. McCormack** of **Princeton Theological Seminary** in **New Jersey** argued that Barth’s more conventional early doctrine of the Trinity as formulated in *CD I/1* needs to be reformulated in light of his later Christology as presented in *CD IV/1* and that this would lead to a more non-conventional view of the doctrine. For McCormack, Barth’s earlier Christology was controlled by revelation rather than by soteriological considerations. Because of this Barth’s idea of Lordship, which was the basis for his concept of revelation, was abstract and was not controlled by God’s decision to be God for us in Jesus Christ as it was in *CD IV*. In Barth’s earlier rendering he seemed to maintain that hiddenness applied to the Father and not to the Son and this made it impossible for him to get to the immanent Trinity. Against his own intentions Barth made God ultimately unknowable, and Barth was unable to say clearly that God’s essence and works are one—there is only an analogous relation between God’s works and God’s essence so that we really cannot know God’s essence. At that point in his thinking Barth had not yet

discovered his own voice but largely presented the Thomistic traditional doctrine.

McCormack claimed that Barth’s doctrine needs recasting in light of his views of election and Christology. In answer to the question of how God can live a human life and suffer and die without ceasing to be God, McCormack believes the Barth of *CD IV* maintained that suffering and death do not change God because they are essential to him. This is not to be understood in a Hegelian sense, McCormack argued. Nonetheless, we must also say that since the being of God and humanity are one in the history of Jesus, therefore Jesus’ history constitutes the second person of the Trinity. Ultimately, what happens in history as God suffers and dies in Jesus Christ represents the outworking of the event in which God gives himself his being in eternity. Here God is seen as essentially God-human.

Barth himself never tried to re-write his doctrine of the Trinity. But in light of what is said in *CD IV* we can now say that suffering is essential to God because for Barth obedience is seen as essential to the divine being. The immanent Trinity and the economic Trinity must be identical so that the incarnation is not seen as a new event for God. Since receptivity is already a mode of being of God as Son, he is already what he will become; there is no eternal Son in the abstract because his name is Jesus Christ. For the Barth of *CD IV*, God’s essence is no longer equated with hiddenness since Barth added humility and obedience to the second Person of the Trinity. McCormack concluded his presentation by attempting to explain why he thinks this reconception of the doctrine ultimately is in line with Nicene orthodoxy.

Plenary speakers included Professor **Ivor Davidson** of the **University of Otago** (now at the **University of St. Andrews**, Scotland), Associate Professor **Murray Rae** of the **University of Otago** and Professor **Ulrike Link-Wieczorek** of the **University of Oldenburg**, Germany.

Professor **Ivor Davidson** spoke about some of the ways in which the theme of divine luminosity functions in Barth's mature theology, and their implications for the assessment of Barth's significance as a theologian of the Trinity. He offered an interesting and important dogmatic account of God as light in relation to Barth's theology. **Murray Rae** spoke about the "spatiality of God". By engaging with Barth's account of God's spatiality, Rae explored the question: in what way does the spatial expression of the conceptual reality with which theology is concerned correspond to the being of God? Critics of Barth were considered, and an argument was developed that suggested that Barth's conception of divine spatiality does not involve the projection of creaturely categories onto God; instead it requires a reconsideration of the nature of those creaturely categories themselves. **Ulrike Link-Wieczorek** spoke about the doctrine of the Trinity and inter-religious dialogue arguing that Christian speech about the Trinity should be understood primarily from the credo for the identity of the God of Israel and God in Jesus Christ. Such speech should be seen as binding Jewish and Christian God-talk rather than differentiating them. Link-Wieczorek proposed that the meaning of immanent trinitarian speech about God is contemplative rather than propositional since it invites us into a contemplative relation with the living God. As such this speech is the Christian basis for inter-religious dialogue. The Muslim criticism of trinitarian speech about God found in the Koran embodies three specific misunderstandings that are also present in Christianity. It stems from a misconception of the metaphoric trinitarian personal terms; an implicit monophysite Christological tendency in speaking about the Son as a person; and it asserts a reversal of knowledge of the economic and immanent Trinity. The challenge of trinitarian science in Christian-Muslim dialogue consists in placing it into the context of a Christian credo: the living God Jesus Christ is no one other than the God of Israel. A Christian-Muslim monotheism is only to be

obtained as Jewish-Christian-Muslim monotheism in mutual recognition.

**Andrew Burgess, Vicar of All Saints Anglican Parish in Nelson, NZ** spoke about the nature of salvation as a work of the triune God. One of his key claims was that failure to develop a theology of salvation within a properly triune framework leads to theological distortion and potentially damages the self-understanding of the church in relation to partnership in God's mission. This also involves the claim that a proper understanding of the *telos* of salvation is essentially a trinitarian matter as we are led to examine the saving purpose of God for all creation and for humans in particular.

**Antony Glading**, a student at **Laidlaw-Carey Graduate school**, spoke about "Temporality, Triunity and the Third Article: The Mediatorial Role of the Spirit in the Life of the Believer".

**Dr Myk Habets, lecturer in Systematic Theology and Director of the R.J. Thompson Centre for Theological Studies, Carey Baptist College, Auckland, NZ** spoke about the current state of discussion regarding the *filioque* arguing that after Barth and Torrance a reconceived trinitarian model is required in order to adequately address the concerns of East and West over that particular issue. By reconceiving the Trinity, the coinherence of the Divine Persons may be understood in such a way that the *filioque* becomes unnecessary.

**Dr Nicola Hoggard Creegan, Lecturer in Systematic Theology at Laidlaw-Carey Graduate School**, examined types of vestiges of the Trinity in creation asking whether creation can be revelatory in its givenness and in "saturated phenomena" which point to divinity and transcendence. Hoggard Creegan examined the repercussions for science and for faith of understanding creation as bound in the trinitarian love of God.

**Dr Adam McIntosh, Minister of the South Ballarat Uniting Church, Australia** explored



the reasons why Karl Barth's doctrine of appropriation has received little attention by Barth scholars especially in relation to his ecclesiology. McIntosh maintained that even when the doctrine is acknowledged, it tends to be either dismissed as an anachronism of Western Augustinian trinitarianism or not given adequate consideration. After investigating how Barth's doctrine of appropriation contributes to a trinitarian ecclesiology, McIntosh argued that this doctrine provides a hermeneutic for divine personhood and correspondingly a hermeneutic for the ecclesia. The doctrine of appropriation gives intelligibility and language for a multifaceted ecclesiology by presenting intensified perspectives of the church as it corresponds to the concreteness and particularity of the divine persons.

**Ashley Moyse**, a PhD student at the **University of Wales-Lampeter**, presented a biomedical ethical model rooted in the doctrine of the Trinity that encourages a dialogue concerning normative ethics, such that the three otherwise conflicting principles governing human life, social responsibility and clinical practice in biomedical science are understood as unified and interdependent. Relying upon Karl Barth's theology and ethics along with secondary sources, this paper demonstrated how theology may be able to reconcile the tensions and resolve the conflict evident in the contemporary use of normative theories and provide a coherent foundation for discerning right human action and being in relation to the emerging constellation of biomedical ethical dilemmas.

**Dr Benjamin Myers**, Lecturer in Systematic Theology at Charles Sturt University's School of Theology in Sydney, presented a paper arguing that *CD IV/1* offers a different view of revelation. Relying in part on the thinking of Rowan Williams and also on the thinking of Bruce McCormack, Myers claimed that God's being is identical with his act in the death of Jesus so that, with Williams, we might say that God is eternally liable to elect and eternally exposed to suffering in Jesus. Based on this thinking Myers argued that a drastic

revision is necessary so that we may see the cross as the event of self-differentiation in God. Myers proceeded to argue that God has no being apart from what happens in the man Jesus. There is, according to Myers, no divine being without relation to this man. In other words, Myers claimed that "Jesus makes God to be God". Quite naturally this led Myers to claim that any *logos asarkos* is idolatry since the Son pre-exists only as the one who is *deus pro nobis*. Thus the second person of the Trinity is a human being. God's inner relations, accordingly, are determined by history. Myers maintained that God is a God not of choice but of decision. Therefore God's use of freedom is for only one choice; God has no option but to love us in Jesus. Freedom is the necessity of God's own loving decision. There can be no notion that God might have chosen otherwise.

**Dr Hayden Nelson**, a church Pastor and Principal of the Bible College of Western Australia presented a paper arguing that a trinitarian conception of divine ontology gives legitimate theological grounds for affirming truths about God that are best articulated in a binary form of language—that is, utilizing language of both-and rather than either-or. When considered in the context of divine immutability and impassibility, such an approach leads to a conception of active constancy—a dynamic stillness—in that there are dimensions in which it might be argued that God does change and others in which God does not. Through a consideration of the contemporary critique of classical theology occasioned by the Open Theism proposal, Nelson argues against conceiving divine immutability and impassibility in terms of unchanging and apathetic inertness. Rather, when conceived via a trinitarian paradigm, each should be considered as robust terms incorporating both constant faithfulness and active relationality.

**Andrew Nicol**, a PhD student in theology at the **University of Otago** presented a paper exploring the necessity of death in the theology of Robert Jenson with reference to Karl Barth's

discussion of “Ending Time”. Much Christian thought has tended to see death as a result of the fall, as an intrusion in the natural order of things. Nevertheless, some influential theologians have suggested that death is also part of God’s original intention for human beings. Karl Barth and Robert Jenson have both argued that, understood in this way, death as such is an appropriate boundary to finitude. Nicol explored the necessity of death in Jenson’s theology and its critical importance for his ontology of personhood. This theme emerges early in Jenson’s thought and is consistently characterized by conversation with one of his earliest and most influential dialogue partners—Karl Barth. For this reason the paper started with a synopsis of Barth’s construal of death as “Ending Time”, and moved to an analysis of Jenson’s thought which observes his ongoing affinity with Barth and his almost inevitable departures.

**Dr Phillip Tolliday**, an ordained **Anglican Minister in the diocese of Adelaide** who teaches **Systematic Theology at St. Barnabas’ College for the School of Theology at Flinders University**, presented a paper using the work of Australian theologian Kevin Giles in his response to the *Doctrine Commission of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney* in its report on Subordinationism and the gender debate. This debate between Giles and members of the Sydney Doctrine Commission provides a contemporary context for ascertaining whether Giles or his interlocutors have Barth correctly focused. In a concluding comment made by Dennis Jowers (*SJT*, 56:2, 232-46, 2003), the claim is made that, “Above all, we object to Barth’s idea of an eternal obedience rendered to the Father by the Son, a hypothesis introduced in *CD IV/1* which undermines Barth’s case against subordinationism set forth in volume 1.” Giles argues that Barth’s comments on subordination in *CD IV* should be understood to refer not to the Son simpliciter, but rather to the “Godhead . . . who is high and humble.” Tolliday outlined Giles’ position and touched briefly on the discussion that currently drives the Molnar-McCormack

conversation: did Barth change his mind in *CD II/2*?

As might be expected from the wide variety of perspectives on display in the many papers offered at this symposium there was some intense discussion over just how to understand Barth and how to understand God’s freedom *in se* and *ad extra*. On Thursday evening May 14 all the participants continued that discussion over dinner at a nearby hotel. All in all it was a very fine symposium and all present are extremely grateful to **Dr Myk Habets** for organizing this very successful event.

### Book Review

*Incarnation Anyway: Arguments for a Supralapsarian Christology*. By EDWIN CHR. VAN DRIEL. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. Pp. 194. \$74.00. American Academy of Religion Series, ed. Kimberly Rae Connor, University of San Francisco.

In this slim volume, Edwin Chr. Van Driel revisits an ancient question: “Why did Christ become incarnate?” Driel, an Assistant Professor of Theology at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, observes that the majority tradition in the West has answered this question in terms of sin. The Incarnation is the divine response to the Fall of Adam. Instead, he renders a “minority report,” surveying and arguing for a supralapsarian position. Had there been no fall, Christ would have become incarnate anyway.

The weakness of most supralapsarian cases from the medieval era onward, Driel argues, is their counterfactual phrasing of the question: “Would Christ have become incarnate had human beings not sinned?” To ask in such a manner is already to cede the ground to the infralapsarian position. For it takes infralapsarianism’s strength for granted and immediately exposes its own chink. Where infralapsarianism simply follows the biblical narrative, counterfactual supralapsarianism opens itself to



charges of unnecessary speculation. This is especially the case in the Reformed tradition, which from Calvin on, has eyed speculation suspiciously as an occasion for theological vanity.

But might a supralapsarian position be offered that sidesteps the charge of speculation? Driel looks for guidance in three specific proposals. The first is F.D.E. Schleiermacher's argument from redemption. Schleiermacher's notion of absolute dependence and unique understanding(s) of omnipotence culminate in doctrines of sin, redemption, and the Redeemer, where each is conceived as necessary. God authors sin in order to sharpen humanity's longing for the Redeemer who mediates the divine to the created. Driel concludes that Schleiermacher's proposal fails. Not only does its ontology sit inconsistently with its Christology, its notion of sin's necessity bespeaks a dualism in which the good needs the bad in order to be good.

Finding Schleiermacher's proposal to be lacking, Driel turns to Isaak Dorner, who understands the Incarnation to be embedded in and the consummation of creation. The incarnation, for Dorner, is the perfection of revelation, necessary to establish the absolute religion, and required for God to establish an ethical relationship with human beings. Though Driel esteems Dorner over Schleiermacher for the former's emphasis on interpersonal relationships, Dorner's proposal is finally judged to be clouded with ambiguity. Is the Incarnation to be conceived ontologically or interpersonally? Similarly, is it a means or an end? Attention to these questions raises a third deeper one: Is Creation contingent or necessary? For each question, Dorner's proposal seems to contain incompatible answers that threaten to undo it.

These incompatibilities will be resolved, says Driel, only by a fundamental reorientation of Dorner's supralapsarianism from creation to eschatology. One in which the Incarnation, as the first, free divine decision, determines the

goal of all of reality. Which brings Driel to Barth and his most sustained interaction yet. In two chapters—covering Barth's supralapsarian narrative and ontology respectively—Driel displays a thorough and generous command of both primary and secondary literature. (His reading of and contribution to the McCormack/Molnar debate, for example, is to be commended as especially clarifying). Although he presents Barth as the best alternative of the three case studies, Driel is not without criticism. Of particular interest should be the perceived weaknesses in Barth's understanding of human agency and the problematic notion of creational entropy. The Incarnation as the renewal of *human nature* seems ill-equipped to account for how grace comes to *human persons*, the counter-arguments of John Webster notwithstanding. And *Das Nightige* seems to leave Barth in a position similar to Schleiermacher's above, in which evil is the necessary backdrop over against which good is known.

A supralapsarian position that will withstand the charge of speculation must be rooted in eschatology. It must resist the temptation to regard sin (and/or evil) as necessary. And it must take with utmost seriousness—because the Bible does—the grace God displays in Christ toward human persons. Driel concludes his study with three arguments that, he claims, do just that. The first is an argument from eschatological superabundance. Starting from the premise—intuited in both West and East—that the glory of the eschaton is greater than the glory of the original creation, it consequently claims that the glory of the eschaton can in no way be contingent upon sin. If Christ is the embodiment of the eschatological life, further, then his incarnation is also independent of sin. It must be conceived along supralapsarian lines.

Second, Driel argues from the premise that in the eschaton, human beings will enjoy full intimacy with God—the *visio Dei*. If eschatological life is *embodied life*, Driel argues, it follows that the *visio Dei* is not simply intellectual cognition, but also involves

sensory contact. And if the eschatological vision of God involves sensory perception, God must be embodied.

Finally, Driel offers an argument from divine friendship. The Bible, says Driel, presents God's ultimate goal in creating as friendship with creatures. This desire for friendship is displayed fully in the radical availability of God made present as a human being. The Incarnation is the fullest expression of the divine desire for friendship with humans. Reparation of the rift created by sin is, on this understanding, not the logical precursor to friendship with God. Rather the reverse is the case. Because God has intended from all eternity to befriend us in Christ, in Christ he deals with sin. Incarnation precedes sin and salvation.

Slim yet substantial best describes *Incarnation Anyway*. Its analyses of Schleiermacher and Barth are careful and provocative. Its re-introduction of Dorner to English-speaking theology is welcome. Its unique arguments withstand the criticisms typically directed against supralapsarian christologies. Far from simply being a minority report, this book takes the debate to a new level. Moreover, these arguments are presented in such a way as to invite sustained pastoral reflection and to open new, suggestive ways of thinking about preaching, evangelism, and other elements in pastoral theology. It is highly recommended.

**Tim Perry, Ph.D.**  
St. Mary Magdalene Church  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

\*\*\*\*\*

The *Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship* will meet on Friday afternoon, November 6, 2009 in **Montréal, CANADA** in Palais des Congrès de Montréal—513A from 1 P.M. to 4:00 P.M. There will be a brief Business Meeting at 1 P.M. with the main program immediately following. The Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship is

privileged to have **Professor John Webster**, Chair of Systematic Theology, King's College, **University of Aberdeen**, Scotland, UK as their invited speaker this year. John's lecture is entitled: "**Thomas F. Torrance on Scripture**". In recent years, John has focused on giving a doctrinal account of the nature and interpretation of Scripture through such doctrines as revelation, salvation, sanctification and church. This promises to be an exciting meeting.

*Some food for thought*

"Modernist dogmatics is finally unaware of the fact that in relation to God man has constantly to let something be said to him, has constantly to listen to something, which he constantly does not know and which in no circumstances and in no sense can he say to himself. Modernist dogmatics hears man answer when no one has called him. It hears him speak with himself. For it, therefore, proclamation is a necessary expression of the life of the human community known as the 'Church,' an expression in which one man, in the name and for the spiritual advancement of a number of others, drawing from a treasure common to him and to them, offers, for the enrichment of this treasure, an interpretation of his own past and present as a witness to the reality alive in this group of men." Karl Barth, *CD I/1*, 61.

**ANNUAL BARTH SOCIETY DUES**

Everyone interested in joining the **Karl Barth Society of North America** is invited to become a member by sending your name, address (including email address) and annual dues of \$20.00 (\$10.00 for students) to:

Professor Paul D. Molnar  
Editor, KBSNA Newsletter  
Department of Theology  
and Religious Studies  
St. John Hall  
St. John's University  
8000 Utopia Parkway  
Queens, New York 11439  
Email: molnarp@stjohns.edu

Checks drawn on a U.S. bank should be made payable to the **Karl Barth Society of North America**

*Your annual dues enable the KBSNA to help underwrite the annual Karl Barth Conference and to attract keynote speakers. The KBSNA thanks all who have paid their dues for this year.*